

Message Text

SECRET

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43

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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P R 151525Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5822

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USNATO BRUSSELS 3971

S E C R E T BRUSSELS 00397

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE ARMS CONTROL

REF: STATE 006146

1. WE CALLED ON AMBASSADOR PATERNOTTE, FOREIGN MINISTRY'S DIRECTOR FOR MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS AND FORMER AMBASSADOR TO LEBANON, AND CONVEYED POINTS CONTAINED IN REFTEL.

2. PATERNOTTE ASSURED US THAT GOB'S ARMS EXPORT CONTROL SYSTEM - INCLUDING PERSONAL SIGNING OF EXPORT LICENSES BY FOREIGN MINISTER - PRECLUDED SALES OF MILITARY ARMS PRODUCED IN BELGIUM TO ANY NON-GOVERNMENT PURCHASER. HE ADMITTED THAT THERE WERE "CERTAINLY" BELGIAN ARMS AND AMMO IN LEBANON CURRENTLY AND CITED THE FAL AUTOMATIC RIFLE MANUFACTURED BY FABRIQUE NATIONAL AT LIEGE. THESE WEAPONS HE THOUGHT WERE PROBABLY BOTH "SURPLUS"

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WEAPONS AND REASSEMBLED WEAPONS (PIECES FROM TWO OR THREE

INOPERATIVE WEAPONS COMBINED TO MAKE ONE SERVICEABLE WEAPON), "POSSIBLY COMING FROM THE GERMAN ARMY". HE ADDED THAT THERE WERE A NUMBER OF "VERY COMPETENT" INTERNATIONAL SURPLUS WEAPONS DEALERS, INCLUDING ONE AMERICAN, CURRENTLY IN THE LEBANESE TRADE. HE SAID THAT PERIODICALLY BELGIAN POLICE HAVE UNCOVERED WHAT HE TERMED "SMALL SCALE ARMS RACKETEERING" BUT THAT THIS TYPE OF LIMITED ACTIVITY HAD VIRTUALLY NO IMPACT ON LEBANESE PROBLEM - HE CITED RECENT POLICE RAID IN LIEGE THAT NETTED ONLY 10-15 RIFLES AND PISTOLS. HE THOUGHT THAT SOME OF NON-BELGIAN WEAPONS THAT HAVE FOUND THEIR WAY TO LEBANON MAY HAVE COME FROM ITALIAN ARMY DEPOTS.

3. PATERNOTTE ASSERTED THAT ARMS SUPPLIED TO MOSLEMS IN LEBANON WERE PROVIDED AT NOT COST AND THAT THE SUPPLY WAS UNLIMITED AND THE OVERLAND DELIVERY ROUTES ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO PLUG UP. HE SAID THAT SYRIAN ARMY WAS PROVIDING BOTH SOPHISTICATED ARMS AND VIRTUALLY TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT TO CERTAIN MOSLEM UNITS FIGHTING IN LEBANON. HE ASSERTED THAT LIBYA WAS ALSO HEAVILY INVOLVED IN PROVIDING ARMS TO MOSLEM SIDE. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE SAID, CHRISTIANS HAD TO PAY CASH FOR THEIR ARMS AND HAD THE MORE DIFFICULT PROBLEM OF DELIVERY BY SEA. ACCORDING TO PATERNOTTE, CHRISTIANS WERE HAVING PROGRESSIVELY HARDER TIME RAISING HARD CASH FOR ARMS PURCHASES, AND ADDED THAT RICH LEBANESE CHRISTIANS, MAY OF WHOSE WEALTH WAS TIED UP IN NON-LIQUID ASSETS LIKE LAND, BUILDINGS AND EQUIPMENT, WERE RUNNING OUT OF READY CASH BECAUSE OF ECONOMIC STAGNATION CAUSED BY PROTRACTED FIGHTING.

4. PATERNOTTE FELT THAT STATEMENTS DEPLORING OR CONDEMNING SUPPLYING OF ARMS TO LEBANON WOULD ACHIEVE NOTHING. ONLY "ON THE SPOT CONTROL" WOULD HAVE ANY CHANCE OF SUCCESS. HE SAID WHOLE LEBANESE SITUATION URGENTLY REQUIRED A UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING FORCE UNDER ARTICLES 34-35 OF CHARTER, AND EC-9 WERE ALREADY ON RECORD AS READY TO CONTRIBUTE PERSONNEL. HE ADDED THAT UN SECURITY COUNCIL SHOULD NOW BE FACING LEBANESE CRISIS RATHER THAN MAKING VAGUE STATEMENTS ABOUT THE PALESTINIANS. HE CALLED THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT "A BUNCH OF BASTARDS" FOR NOT REQUESTING

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U.N. HELP AND EMPHASIZED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO MORE LEBANON IN SIX MONTHS AT THE PRESENT RATE OF DESTRUCTION. HE THOUGHT TIME WAS RIPE FOR U.S. TO APPROACH SYRIANS ALONG FOLLOWING LINES:
- SYRIA HAS ALREADY ACHIEVED MANY OF ITS OBJECTIVES;
- PUSHING ANY FARTHER WILL BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE,
TOTALLY DESTROY LEBANON AND TRIGGER GENERAL
MIDDLE EAST WAR.

5. PATERNOTTE TOLD US HE WOULD DISCUSS ARMS CONTROL
PROBLEM WITH COLLEAGUES IN FOREIGN MINISTRY AND INFORM
US OF ANY FURTHER IDEAS OR COMMENTS. HE REQUESTED THAT WE
KEEP HIM INFORMED OF DEVELOPMENTS. FIRESTONE

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARMS CONTROL MEETINGS, EXPORT LICENSES, COMBAT OPERATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BRUSSE00397
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760015-0846
From: BRUSSELS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760155/aaaabwwwu.tel
Line Count: 120
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 76 STATE 6146
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 MAR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <25 MAR 2004 by izenbel0>; APPROVED <03 AUG 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LEBANESE ARMS CONTROL
TAGS: PFOR, MASS, MOPS, LE
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006